

Head of President's Council Praises DLA-GSA Partnership



Jim Connaughton, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality (fourth from left), and the briefing team from DLA and GSA. (Photos by Thomas Wilkins)

Defense Logistics Agency environmental officials traveled to frigid Washington, D.C., Jan. 18 with their General Services Agency partners and received a warm response as they reported on the success of their Environmental Management System efforts.

"The president made clear that good government must lead by example," said Jim Connaughton, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, speaking to the DLA and GSA contingent. "I want to applaud you for all your hard work."

He spoke at the conclusion of a presentation about how DLA and GSA have signed a memorandum of understanding that created the first federal inter-agency EMS, at the Hart-Dole-Inouye Federal Center in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Connaughton noted that DLA represents the Department of Defense, "the world's largest industrial organization," while GSA is "the world's largest landlord." This interaction, Connaughton said, has set the standard for similar arrangements between agencies throughout the federal government.

In the Truman Room of the White House Conference Center next to Lafayette Park, DLA and GSA explained to Connaughton and Alex Beehler, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, how they joined forces and, in only a few months, developed a memorandum of understanding that can stand as a model for other federal agencies.

Beehler also praised this ground-breaking effort, "This MOU demonstrates our ongoing commitment to protecting the environment and improving defense readiness, and how important it is to work together within the federal government."

Jean Shorett, DLA EMS manager, told the group the Battle Creek Federal Center "was a natural for the EMS pilot study." GSA has controlled the facility since 1954, and the center houses two DLA field activities -- the Defense Logistics Information Service and Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service. The Federal Center, according to Shorett, offered a showcase for improving collaboration in implementing EMS.

"Federal Center EMS representatives, their site directors and commanders deserve tremendous credit for leading by example and letting us use them as models for a joint EMS," she said.

In general terms, an environmental management system is an improved business practice designed to make environmental excellence a tool for improving overall mission performance. It describes what will be done, how the process will be measured and what indicators will determine when objectives and targets have been met.

"All employees in an organization should know what the EMS policy says and where they fit in making it happen," said Federal Environmental Executive Ed Pinero, who organized the Washington event.

The Agency has set a fast pace for EMS compliance thanks to its leaders taking charge, Shorett said. The DLA Corporate Board included its EMS objectives in the Agency's strategic plan. As part of that plan, she said, EMS is "an active tool for accomplishing our strategic goals." As a result, DLA's EMS team is well on its way to implementing an improved business practice for both environmental excellence and meeting DLA's strategic goals."

Taking the DLA experience out of the box and sharing it with outside agencies has reaped immediate rewards at Battle Creek, according to Raheem Cash of GSA, who described how the MOU fit with GSA's EMS program.

"Being the federal government's landlord," he said, "none of the facilities we manage is good enough if all we do is keep the lights on and the water running. We need to support our tenant agencies to help them fulfill their mission, and environmental stewardship is important to the agencies' mission. We want to think of our tenants not as tenants but as customers, and the memorandum of understanding about EMS helps us do that very well.

"As we go forward at GSA," Cash said, "the EMS memorandum is the model to help us work with tenants. A tremendous effort has gone into this agreement at Battle Creek, and I'm impressed with how well it fits into facility's environmental standards. We need to bring this out so we can work in similar ways with our other customers."

Following the EMS briefing, Pinero explained that during the MOU signing in Battle Creek he was briefed on Federal Center environmental programs. He then

introduced an overview of those programs by Jan Reitman, staff director of DLA's Environment and Safety Policy Office. Pinero said he was very impressed with the Federal Center programs and how well they fit with using EMS. Reitman also described other key programs at the Federal Center.

In thanking the group, Pinero emphasized his support for the DLA-GSA partnership and said he looked forward to sharing their success with agencies across the federal system.

Based on original article by Jim Katzaman, DLA Public Affairs